

Hanukah Overview

Hanukkah (also spelled Chanukah or Hanukah), is an annual festival of the Jews celebrated on eight successive days to honor the restoration of divine worship in the Temple after it had been defiled by heathens. The return of their religious liberty was to them as life from the dead and, in remembrance of it, they kept an annual holiday on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev. Kislev is the third month of the Jewish calendar corresponding, approximately, to early December in the Gregorian calendar. Jesus kept this festival. The principal source for the story of Hanukkah is found in the Talmud.

The biggest lesson of Hanukkah was the power of the spirit, the ability of God's people to live by God's commands. ...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts (Zech. 4:6). In between the Testaments, around 164 b.c., the Maccabees led by Judah Maccabee, wrested Judea from the rule of the Seleucids-Syrian rulers who supported the spread of Greek religion and culture.

Hanukkah commemorates the recapture of Jerusalem by the Maccabees and the establishment of the Temple. The Temple had been profaned by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, king of Syria and overlord of Palestine. The Maccabees ruled Judea until Herod took power in 37 b.c.

Hanukkah centers around a nine-branch menorah. The Temple menorah has seven branches. The Hanukkah menorah has nine branches, eight to remember the eight days of Hanukkah and one is the shamus, the candle used to light the other candles (this is usually either higher or separate from the other eight branches).

Jesus once stood in front of the large menorah and said "I am the light of the world" and all the leaders know who and what he meant.

Messianic Significance of Chanukah

The Messiah in Hanukkah

The law did not require Jews to be at the Temple in Jerusalem, as this was not one of the pilgrimage festivals. Every one observed it in his own place, not as a holy time. Jesus was there that He might improve those eight days of holiday for good purposes.

Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch when the Sadducians asked him "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ tell us." They pretended to want to know the truth, as if they were ready to embrace it; but it was not their intention. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me (John 10:25-27). He had told them, and they believed not; why then should they be told again, merely to gratify their curiosity?

Miracles

Hanukkah's theme is of a miracle. During Hanukkah Jesus spoke of His miracles: If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him (John 10:37-38). Jesus wanted the people of his day to see His miracles and believe in Him as a result. His miracles point to his divine and messianic identity. In this way Yeshua personifies the message of Hanukkah: God actively involved in the affairs of his people. Hanukkah reminds us that God is a God of miracles, not just of concept and religious ideals. He has broken through into human history and continues to do so today. All of us who know Yeshua can speak of God's working in our lives (Gilman 1995).

Jesus is the Light of the World

Jesus preached three sermons in which he declared Himself the "light of the world," and all three could have been during Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights. (It is not clear from the text when this incident happened, but it was some time between the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah); both of these celebrations focused on light).

Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them (John 12:35-36).

Just before Jesus announced that He was the Light of the world, Jesus had shone upon the conscience of those who accused the adulteress. Read the story in John Chapter 8. John also records Jesus healing a blind man (9:1-12) at about the same time (8:12 and 9:5) that Jesus declared himself to be the Light of the world. *When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing (John 9:5-7).*

End Times

The story of Hanukkah can be compared with end-time happenings described in the books of Revelation and Daniel. Antiochus is a type of the antichrist. Just as happened under the rule of Antiochus, Daniel prophesied in Daniel 9:27 *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.*

The same powers promoted by Antiochus are in the world today. Worldwide immorality, and idolatry are the norm. We must come out and be separate. And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. The deceiver stands waiting to devour in this present culture (2 Cor. 6:16-17).